

Changing Consumer Behavior in Diet and Health: A Case Study on *Local Matters*

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation
with research distinction in Marketing in the undergraduate
colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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ABSTRACT

For the first time in two centuries, the life expectancy of children is less than that of their parents due to food related health problems (Belluck, 2005). According to WebMD, “One in three American children born in 2000 will develop diabetes if they adopt the nation’s inactive and overeating lifestyle. [...] For Hispanic children [...] about one in two will develop the disease” (2003).

To combat diabetes and obesity and to improve national health, many children will need to change their consumer decision-making processes regarding food. Instilling healthy food habits and values through early education may be the key to these improvements. In Columbus, Ohio, non-profit organization Local Matters aims to bring about healthier eating habits by educating young children about food.

Local Matters’ Food is Elementary program at Indianola K8 Informal actively addresses the obesity epidemic. The program teaches children in grades K-1 the importance of healthy food. Besides dietary health information, the curriculum tries to instill an emotional association between healthy food and happiness through sensory and social activities. Smelling, touching, cooking, and eating food creations are incorporated with socializing with classmates.

My fourteen-minute documentary portrays Local Matters’ efforts in developing healthful consumer behavior at a young age. With my camera, I documented and

observed Local Matters' operations, cooking lessons, challenges, as well as the children's participation and reactions, and parental responses. Based on interviews with children, parents, and Local Matters, I analyzed the program and assessed its effects.

Showcasing my documentary at the OSU Denman Research Forum and the 2011 Association for Consumer Behavior Film Competition will raise awareness of children's health and the anticipated benefits of teaching programs such as Food is Elementary.

DEDICATION

To the Hu Family

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Haugtvedt, Janet Parrott, Dan Shellenbarger, and Phillip Garrett for their guidance and support. To the Hu family, Christopher Burton, and my friends, thank you for your love and encouragement. To the Local Matters staff, especially Trish Dehnbostel, Jesse Hickman, Elizabeth Bolen, I truly appreciated this opportunity to work with such a wonderful organization. Additionally, I am grateful Indianola K8 Informal's staff, parents, and students allowed me to carry my studies in their institution. I would like to thank all interviewed OSU staff, for helping me find my true interests for research. Lastly, thank you to the Fisher College of Business for granting me the funds that made this project possible and to the ACCAD Advanced Computing Center for Art and Design for providing me my home away from home, the editing lab, where my vision came to fruition.

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PBS The Ohio Channel (October 2008-August 2010, Columbus, OH)

Production Intern

- Crafted scripts and edited videos for numerous program series including *An Interview with Ohio Author*, *2009 Ohio eTech Conference*, and *OSU Urban Arts Space*
- Filmed, directed, and edited Ohio Channel's tapings of WOSU's radio show *Open Line with Fred Andrie*
- Operated cameras and keys for Ohio House, Senate, and Supreme Court sessions
- Made dubs in Digital Betacam, BetacamSP, DVCAM and DVD formats

ACCAD Advanced Computing Center for Design (August 2009-December 2009, Columbus, OH)

Assistant Editor

- Edited *The Other Men in Black*, a short film for the Melton Center for Jewish Studies at The Ohio State University
- Selected quality audio bites and music

City Lights Media Group (June 2008-August 2008, New York, NY)

Production Intern, Art and Wardrobe Assistant

- Transcribed interviews for Travel Channel's *21 Sexiest Beach Bars*, *21 Manly Man Adventures*, *21 Sexiest Caribbean Escapes*, *21 Sinful Vegas Spots*
- Hand delivered tapes throughout midtown Manhattan
- Researched via the internet future locations of interest for upcoming 21 Series Travel Channel shows
- Cataloged and organized interview sound bites for scripting
- Loaded video into editing lab computers for future editing
- Provided production crew with on set needs and wrangled talent
- Selected and purchased featured fashion accessories for WE Channel's program *Cinematherapy*

EMPLOYMENT/INTERNSHIPS CONTINUED:

Akjak Productions (August 2008, New York, NY)

Production Assistant, Art Department Assistant

- Chose and acquired props needed for original short film *Suspicious Package*
- Supported crew with set-up and production needs on set
- Short participated in RE:UP Magazine's 'exquisite corpse' project, BOXED, at the Scion Easy Ten Filmmaker Series

Passage Insights (April 2008-June 2008, Columbus, OH)

Marketing Intern

- Developed and implemented Leslie Meyer's marketing strategy and campaign
- Researched and contacted businesses for Leslie Meyer to present promotional presentations on life coaching
- Wrote Leslie Meyer's cover letter to inform prospective clientele about her business and services

FILM/VIDEO AWARDS and SHOWS:

Campus MovieFest Film Competition Best Picture

Director, Writer, Animator, Editor, Artist

Best Picture Regional Campus MovieFest Film Competition (November 2009, Columbus, OH)

Top 16 New York City Campus MovieFest Northern Regional Grand Finale (May 2010, New York, NY)

- Animated original hand-drawn characters and scenery frame by frame for short "Balloon"
- Created over 1,200 pictures in one week via Photoshop
- Compete in Las Vegas at the Campus MovieFest International Grand Finale in June 2010

Drums Downtown V at the Riffe Center, Capitol Theatre (February 2008, Columbus, OH)

- Created 12-minute video piece to be performed with live dance and percussion band
- Harmonized 3 different types of performance art for a live audience of over 1,800 people

Buckeye Film Productions (March 2007-June 2007, Columbus, OH)

Art Director

- Designed sets and collected, purchased, and created props for student-written original short film
- Determined final wardrobe and make-up design to match the personalities of 9 characters and over 25 extras
- Original short film "The Best Day" debuted in the Drexel Gateway Theatre

The Ohio State University College of the Arts (Columbus, OH)

Art and Technology Art Show Participant (Fall 2008, Fall 2007, March 2007)

- 3 video art pieces featured in shows

Undergraduate Art Show Participant (May 2007)

- 35-second original hand-drawn animation video awarded entry into juried undergraduate art show
- Applied Photoshop skills to insert photographs of balloons into each hand-drawn frame

Foundation Program Scholarship (June 2006)

- Awarded to 3 freshman art majors for outstanding foundation program portfolios

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INTRODUCTION

When I first started this project, I did not know where I to begin. I knew I wanted to focus on how consumer behavior affects world issues. However, I could not choose amongst the plethora of issues our world faces: energy, the environment, our health, etc. Then I realized what ties all these issues together is their solution—change. To resolve our global dilemmas, people need to change their behavior.

I decided to focus on how to change consumer behavior, such as what we consume, how we dispose our products, etc. I believe that one effective method to foster change is through early education. Early education could not only instill healthy habits at a young age, but lessons taught to children could also affect older generations. When children come home with new information, they may inspire parents to model the good behavior back to their children. For my project, I conducted qualitative research on Columbus, Ohio non-profit, Local Matters, to observe their methods of implementing change in America's food system through early education.

Local Matters' strives to better the food system through education, increasing accessibility to healthy foods, and promoting fair food policies (Mills, 2010). This non-profit organization conducts three broad programs: Healthful Food Access or previously known as Urban Agriculture, Farm to Fork, and Local Food to School. Healthful Food Access works with the local neighborhoods to construct community gardens. In addition,

this program builds a network of Columbus' local gardens, to unite everyone under one cause. With the Farm to Fork program, Local Matters brings local produce to Columbus residents to increase awareness and access to sustainable foods. Lastly, the Local Food to School program includes multiple school programs that educate children on healthy food and living. I focused mainly in this category; specifically Local Matter's Food is Elementary program.

Food is Elementary, which began in 2008, teaches young children ranging from pre-kindergarteners to second graders about food preparation and cooking, and the importance of healthy food and exercise. The food lessons occur once a week for 28 weeks and focus mainly on whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. The staff does not prepare meat or dairy in their food lessons due to food safety concerns and, more importantly, the lack of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in the American diet.

According to WebMD Health News (2003), "one in three American children born in 2000 will develop diabetes if they adopt the nation's inactive and overeating lifestyle" (page 1). Rabin (2010) found "nearly one in three American children is now considered to be either overweight or obese. [...] The heaviest youngsters [are] more than twice as likely as the thinnest to die prematurely, before age 55" (page 1).

Local Matters is actively addressing this health crisis through its Food is Elementary program at Indianola K-8, which teaches children in grades K-1 the importance of healthy food. Besides dietary health information, the curriculum tries to

instill an emotional association between healthy food and happiness through sensory and social activities. Smelling, touching, cooking, and eating food creations are incorporated with socializing with classmates.

Through qualitative research, I examined how Local Matters' implemented its goals and objectives by observing numerous Food is Elementary class sessions.

Furthermore, through in-depth interviews, I analyzed the parents' and children's understanding of the Food is Elementary program objectives and whether the program changed their consumer behavior.

As a secondary component to this project, I created a short documentary to record and provide insight into my experiences. Documenting class sessions not only allowed me to reexamine the children's learning, parent interviews, and Local Matters' methods, but also allows me to show an audience a personal perspective of the program. Through video, I invite the viewer into the classroom with me. Although I offer my own analysis, the viewer can judge for him or herself the effectiveness of the Food is Elementary program.

While simultaneously conducting a qualitative research project and documentary has its unique challenges, this experience has taught me valuable lessons regarding changing consumer behavior and filmmaking. At the completion of this project, I hope to share my findings with the community and enter my short film *Changing Consumer*

Behavior in Diet and Health: A Case Study on Local Matters in the Association for Consumer Research Film Festival in 2011.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Everyone experiences change in his or her life. One may try to persuade another person to a certain opinion or persuade oneself to quit smoking. Some people try to change the local community or even the world. Regardless of how one experiences change, change is a complicated idea to implement.

Several experts have even developed models of change, such as the transtheoretical model by Prochaska, which categorized personal change regarding health into six parts: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination (Promot, 1997, pg. 1). However, perhaps one does not need to undergo change if he or she already possesses the healthy habit desired.

According to Cooper and Holmes, “eating habits are learned behaviors; they’re not intuitive, so what your children learn to eat at home early in life sticks with them well into adulthood” (2006, p. 2). At a young age, our habits are constantly developing and “[evolving] over time” (Cotugna & Vickery, 2007, p. 194). Hence, a child’s first few years are crucial in developing healthful eating habits. Unlike the time-consuming change models, children cannot necessarily or consciously move through each part of change such as precontemplation or contemplation. Other factors such as self-reevaluation may not occur due to a child’s lack of understanding and self-awareness.

“Most research says that it takes an average of ten to twelve attempts before a child will try a new food, unless they are involved in cooking and gardening projects” (Cooper & Holmes, 2006, p. 6). Under this case, different approaches to introducing foods may increase a child’s speed in gaining healthier habits or curiosity for trying new foods. As suggested by *Helping Your Kids Make Healthy Food Choices* (2010), “parents must teach their children the value of food by cooking together. [...] Parents must make their meal time a family time” (p. 1-2). By involving the child in the cooking process, healthy food selection process, and a pleasant environment with friends or family, a child associates healthy foods with positive experiences and creates a habit of consuming good foods.

While statistics of the health of America’s children continue to worsen, one must realize the importance parenting and early education play in changing the future of our nation’s health. As our food system keeps up with our fast-paced culture, the transparency and quality of our food declines. However, today’s parents can reverse these ill effects simply at home through a positive introduction of healthy food to children at the dinner table. Michael Pollan (2008) states it best:

At the dinner table parents can determine portion sizes, model eating and drinking behavior, and enforce social norms about greed and gluttony and waste. Shared meals are about much more than fueling bodies; they are

uniquely human institutions where our species developed language and this thing we call culture. (p. 189)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Research

For my project, I decided to focus on three entities: Local Matters, the parents, and the children. Although I believe the staff at Indianola K8 Informal plays an important role in the children's education and habit development, I excluded the school employees from my observations to protect their personal opinions on America's food system and the Local Matters program. In addition, due to lack of time, I could not reasonably observe any additional variables, such as Indianola's staff, affecting the child's education.

Obviously, I wanted to observe Local Matters and the children. I was studying the program's effects on its pupils after all. However, I decided to observe the parents as well because I wanted to see if educating children, or changing their consumer behavior, could also change that of the older generations. Additionally, I wanted to observe whether the parents do or do not reinforce the lessons taught in class. In actuality, parents make the final purchasing decisions in the grocery store, not the child.

Once I made these decisions, I negotiated with Local Matters on which institution to research. They allowed me to shadow the Food is Elementary program in two Columbus schools: Clinton Elementary and Indianola K8 Informal. To select where to film, I asked the principals of each school for permission. Unfortunately, Clinton

Elementary denied participation. Thankfully, Indianola K8 Informal approved my request. At Indianola, I would shadow Local Matters' food educators Jesse Hickman and Elizabeth Bolen.

Before conducting research in the public school, I needed approval from the district. By the time I acquired proper consent for my studies in Indianola K8 Informal, only two weeks of the Food is Elementary program remained. To document as much information as possible, I utilized convenience sampling. I filmed all the classes my schedule allowed, four classes of 22 students:

- Wednesday 12:45-1:30 PM
- Wednesday 1:45-2:30 PM
- Thursday 12:45-1:30PM
- Thursday 1:45-2:30PM

To acquire permission to conduct the research study and filming, I distributed take-home packets to the parents. The take-home packets included an explanation of my research project, consent form, and release forms for both parent and child. Parents and children had four options:

- Neither parent nor child will participate
- Only the parent will participate
- Only the child will participate
- Both child and parent will participate

In the end, out of 88 students, 28 children participated. 6 parents also gave consent to participate.

I did not randomly select these numbers. Selection of students and parents for interviews depended on who gave consent for participation, and I interviewed each child and each parent that signed releases.

I conducted in-depth interviews with the Local Matters staff, parents, and students. With the Local Matters interviews (see Appendix A: Local Matters Interview Guide), I wanted to observe each staff member's:

- Personal background
- Knowledge of the organization
- Description of the organization's overall mission
- Description of the Food is Elementary's mission
- Thoughts on the program's results
- Thoughts on the program's effectiveness
- Suggestions for improvement
- Opinion on the program's strengths and weaknesses
- Overall beliefs regarding change

Through these questions, I could gauge an understanding of the type of people involved with Local Matters. Furthermore, the degree of variability in answers regarding the organization's mission and program objections would reflect Local Matters' consistency

in organization culture. Collecting opinions on the staff members' ideas of the program's effectiveness allows me to compare what they perceive versus what the children and parents actually experience. Lastly, the staff members' overall beliefs regarding change grant me a grander viewpoint on their expectations and motivations.

For the in-depth interviews with parents (see Appendix B: Parents Interview Guide), I asked questions regarding each parent's:

- Knowledge of Local Matters as an organization
- Knowledge of Local Matters' overall mission
- Knowledge of Local Matters' Food is Elementary Program
- Opinion on Food is Elementary
- Observations of behavior change in their children and themselves
- Challenges in instilling healthy living and eating habits in the family

These questions allow me to evaluate whether or not the parents were well informed about the organization and the program. Moreover, I could observe whether or not parents agreed with the program's curriculum. This could imply how the parents reinforce or do not reinforce the Food is Elementary lessons at home. Lastly, I could speak in-depth about the family's struggles with living and eating healthy.

With the in-depth interviews for children (see Appendix C: Children Interview Guide), I needed to simplify the questions to the comprehension of a kindergartener and first grader. These questions touched upon:

- Knowledge of the Food is Elementary's objectives
- Understanding of the Food is Elementary lessons
- Memory recall
- Opinions of their experiences
- Whether or not the child wants the program to stay and why
- Whether or not the program helps children and why

This investigation allows me to understand if Local Matters clearly communicates their goals to the children. The students' feedback also informs me of the child's emotional response to the activities. Lastly, I can gauge the importance of healthy living and eating in the children's lives.

All interview data and filmed class sessions were reviewed for analysis. In addition, I observed two class sessions without my video recorder.

Selection of students and parents featured in the documentary depended on quality of answers.

The Documentary

The documentary permits me to share with my audience exactly what I see, ask, and experience in the classroom during the Food is Elementary lessons. The viewer can also judge the raw emotions they witness in the children; these emotions are hard to grasp simply through reading a paper.

With the exception of one class session, I alone operated the audio and video. Furthermore, I created the interview questions myself. Although each person's interview questions followed a basic formulated list, at times I did stray if I wanted to pursue a subject's interesting thought.

On top of filming throughout the duration of class time, each Local Matters staff member's interview lasted on average 45 minutes, ranging from 25 minutes to an hour and ten minutes. For the parents, I interviewed each for about 15 to 30 minutes. Lastly, I interviewed each child for about 10 minutes. In the end, I filmed approximately 30 hours of footage.

In the editing room, I spent well over 60 hours crafting the story of my experience. I wanted my own voice in the piece to allow viewers to understand my thought process. At the same time, I also wanted to show the audience what I saw, so he or she could evaluate the program for him or herself.

A crucial element, which I found difficult to include, was the political and financial challenges Local Matters faces. Due to lack of funding and support, Local Matters struggles to keep its Food is Elementary program in the schools. While I wish I could cover this dilemma in more detail, I was not permitted to disclose this information in the film. Local Matters requested to keep these facts private, so not to disappoint current parents and children. Moreover, the organization wanted to protect relations with soon-to-be-removed partners and potential benefactors.

I feel this financial setback is key to both Local Matters' story and understanding the hindrances of the program. While not exactly a program weakness, outside variables such as funding and school support certainly affect how well the children will retain the lessons taught. Sudden discontinuation of the program eliminates further implementation of curriculum in the child's life. In addition, children may feel abandoned by the program, which they love and adore.

These roadblocks also speak to the challenges of change in general. Organizations and people not only face the complexity of persuading people individually but also the difficulties in changing our overall culture. For instance, the USDA's National School Lunch Program has controlled school lunches since 1946 (2009). The school lunch "system where chicken nuggets, tater tots, chocolate milk with high fructose corn syrup and canned fruit cocktail, or even in some cases popsicles, are an acceptable meal" has changed the way our children eat and the way school kitchens are designed (2009).

Gaining widespread, long-term support for an educational program such as Food is Elementary, which most people value much less than math and science, will take persistence, patience, and money.

OBSERVATIONAL INSIGHTS

The Qualitative Research

Local Matters attempts to change consumer behavior in children regarding diet and health in the following ways:

- Consistent implementation of Food is Elementary lessons
- Hands-on activities, exercise, art projects
- Involving parents through volunteer programs and weekly take-home flyers
- Involving school staff in community garden (at participating schools)
- Ensuring support from school staff before entering

The program's effects on older generations, such as parents, cannot be determined due to my small sample size.

A few statistics could be calculated from my questions. Out of 28 students, 27 could recall Food is Elementary's main objective. 100% of the students wanted the program to return the following year.

With the parents, one parent knew little about Local Matters as an organization. Three parents had volunteered for the organization. Two possessed expert knowledge while the third only had moderate knowledge. The other parents possessed general knowledge of Local Matters. No parent contributed any negative criticism on the

program; they all supported the program. However, a few believed Food is Elementary is better suited for more impoverished, less educated schools than Indianola K8 Informal.

Each Local Matters' staff member shared the same idea for the organization mission and program objective. Each staff member also gave consistent descriptions on typical lesson plans. The members of Local Matters all share a passion for food and health related issues. Not all staff members understood how the program receives funding or how the program is implemented in the schools. All members agree that changing everyone is not possible. Instead, the Local Matters staff views that statement as a goal.

The Documentary

While the film gives a brief introduction to Local Matters and their program Food is Elementary, the fourteen-minute documentary focuses on the children's experiences in the classroom. Through parent confessions, Local Matters staff reactions, and exciting child interviews, the short attempts to communicate the program's effects on the child's life and emphasize the importance of food education at a young age.

Unlike the written thesis, the documentary does not discuss in detail my qualitative observations and limitations. Instead, the film concentrates on expressing the children's elation and engagement, which I cannot explain on paper.

LIMITATIONS

The Qualitative Research

Several limitations affected the results of my project:

- convenience sampling
- representation
- time
- camera's effect on participants' responses
- children's understanding of questions
- truthfulness of children's responses
- difficulty in measuring success quantitatively
- outside variables (parenting, friends, economic status, culture, education)

The children and parents selected for interview may not accurately reflect the general population. I conveniently interviewed available children and parents with signed releases. Additionally, parents who agreed to an interview most likely share a passion for the Food is Elementary Program. A parent who does not appreciate the program or feels indifferent may not want to interview or may feel too embarrassed to voice their opinion. Lastly, Indianola Informal K8 Elementary, a charter school, varies from a typical school. This school supported Local Matters teaching their program in the school. Both the school's staff and parents share enthusiasm for Food is Elementary. In

general, the staff and parents are liberal minded and take interest in environmental and health issues. The student population consists of boys and girls of numerous races.

The success of the program is also difficult to measure. I only followed this program for three weeks. Although Local Matters staff also conducts their own research on the program's success, Food is Elementary only started two years ago. To truly measure this program's effect on diet and health in children, one must observe the participants for years, both in and out of school.

A plethora of outside variables may also alter the program's success. Kindergarteners and first graders do not buy their groceries. They possess some influence over what the parents buy and cook. However, in the end, parents still control the child's diet and health. If a parent defines "healthy" differently or opposes the Food is Elementary Program, the parent will not reinforce the lessons at home. The family's wealth and culture may affect the groceries purchased. Wealth also influences the frequency of restaurant and fast food consumption. Lastly, as these children mature, their social environment, friends and media, will play a greater role in their lives.

The Documentary

Thanks to significant help from Assistant Professor Janet Parrott and Lecturer Dan Shellenbarger, I had access to equipment and advice regarding filming and creating my documentary film.

However, as with any student project, I did run into limitations outside of my own control. I had limited access to extra assistance on-set. Due to my film and video classmate's conflicting time schedules, I had to conduct all filming and audio alone with the exception of one class. This posed unique challenges. Carrying equipment single-handedly was difficult. At times, I even forgot certain key items. Moreover, remembering to ask the right questions while ensuring a good picture and sound could be overwhelming. To be fair, I was my film's director, writer, editor, producer, etc. I was the head of every department necessary for a documentary.

More importantly, I lacked a second opinion. Since I invested so much of myself into this project, I sometimes lost sight of the big picture. As I was easily overwhelmed, having an extra eye would have allowed me to better gauge what additional footage I should capture, as well as another perspective on how the Food is Elementary story could be told.

Time was also an issue. Given additional time to follow the program, I could have further developed the students and Local Matters staff as characters in the film. By this, I mean I could have found little problems that they encountered and fixed over time. I could have witnessed growth in both the children and staff.

DISCUSSION

While several variables may hinder the diet and health change Food is Elementary Program hopes to bring, Local Matters understands this. To increase the chance for success and consumer behavior change, Local Matters attempts to build a community of support.

First, Local Matters does not solicit its program. The organization only conducts its lessons in schools that invite them or ask for their participation. This is crucial to the program's success. Local Matters Executive Director Michael Jones states that, "No one wants to be forced to change or told they are wrong" (personal communication, June 22, 2010). Forcing their program upon others will not further their cause but keep the organization from future success. Requiring a willing school system enables the Local Matters food educators to enter an environment conducive to learning.

Second, the program directors know that if parents' and school teachers' behavior do not reflect those taught in the food lessons, a contradiction forms and children may grow concerned or confused, resulting with rejection of the knowledge gained.

To remove this inconsistency, Local Matters tries to educate schoolteachers and parents on their cause and lessons. Local Matters distributes parent newsletters that explain the classes and includes recipes for the foods taught. The organization also holds a few parent and child cooking sessions, allowing both parties to share in the education

process. In select schools, Local Matters holds Healthy Living Seminars for teachers. In these sessions, Local Matters cook a healthy, delicious meal for school staff and discuss the staff's personal roadblocks to living and eating healthier. Through group discussions, staff members brainstorm ways to improve their diet and health.

In addition, Local Matters encourages schools to develop community gardens. Community gardens at the school allow children, parents, and staff to plant food, watch the plants grow, and finally taste, savor, and consume the fresh produce.

Through education on healthy food and living, Local Matters hopes parents and school staff will share their passion and model good behavior outside of the Food is Elementary lessons.

Local Matters also ensures strong support within their staff. Everyone hired fits the organization's culture. Each employee or volunteer possesses a passion for food. Many spent their childhoods on farms and want to see America's food system revert from processed to wholesome, natural foods. One employee followed a vegan diet for numerous years. Another employee has severe allergies to food dyes and other substances often found in processed foods. Keeping the entire organization in line with its goals helps drive this organization's success. Through the teacher's shared mission, children can clearly see the instructors' genuine enthusiasm and passion for teaching.

The program also helps the child build positive associations towards food through hands-on activities and food prep, exercise, stories, and art. By turning food into an

experience rather than a routine, children seem to enjoy the Food is Elementary lessons. By allowing children to cut and prepare the meals cooked, children explore the food through sight, touch, smell, sound, and finally taste. Their curiosity and excitement in food preparation increase their likelihood to try the food. Additionally, in a fun learning environment with friends, groupthink occurs. A child who typically does not eat his vegetables at home will in class if his friend does. Furthermore, if his friend likes the food, he has a greater chance of liking the food too. The food lessons also incorporate other activities such as exercise, art projects, and story time. For the last Food is Elementary lesson, children rushed to the dance floor after relishing their veggie burgers. Those who chose not to dance drew pictures expressing their love and appreciation for healthy foods. All these lessons tied together make living and eating healthy seem popular and enjoyable. Living and eating healthy no longer seem like a necessary act to correct previously bad habits. It becomes a part of daily life.

Although the programs strengths shined, I did notice some areas in which the organization could improve. Local Matters could strengthen its efforts in involving and educating parents on the organization. I understand the impracticality of this suggestion due to parent schedules and willingness to participate. However, of the six parents I interviewed, all with the exception of two knew very little of Local Matters other programs. For instance, one parent suggested Local Matters should encourage community gardening. Local Matters already conducts a separate program called Health

Food Access, which actively engages in community gardening and actually builds a network of gardens for the public to access. Information for this program can be found on Local Matters' website. However, the parent did not know this.

In addition, not all parents knew about the Food is Elementary volunteering opportunities. Of those who knew, they did not know how to register. For instance, one parent told me she discovered the opening through the program flyers. Meanwhile, another parent told me the program flyers did not include information on volunteering. This discrepancy tells me that either the flyers do not have the information or parents do not read the flyers carefully. To ensure parents receive the educational notifications, Local Matters may want to find more effective means of communication.

Lastly, one parent could not confidently tell me who or what is Local Matters.

I speculate that the six parents, who volunteered to participate in my study, are either passionate about food or taking an active role in their child's lives. This sample may not reflect the rest of the parent population at Indianola. If anything, this sample appears more enthusiastic than typical parents. Under this case, I reason that most of the other parents of the class know little about Local Matters as an organization and its offerings.

I suggest that Local Matters hold a parent and child meeting to simply inform the parents about Local Matters goals, their three large general programs, and the opportunity to volunteer in the classroom. Parents knowledge of all the different Local Matters

programs not only strengthens their understanding of Food is Elementary curriculum, but also fortifies the community and support Local Matters seeks to build.

I also believe Local Matters could hold optional combined child and parent cooking lessons, if possible. In the end, children do not make the purchasing decisions at home. Cooper and Holmes (2006) state:

Most of the parents we know complain that their children refuse to eat healthfully. [...] The real problem most often lies with the parents, not the kids. Most of us are so accustomed to eating out and buying prepared foods in the grocery store that we don't even know what good food is anymore. We can't line our cabinets with packaged cereals and sodas and expect our kids to eat like they were raised on a commune in rural Vermont. In order to be good role models we must educate ourselves first and then practice what we preach. (p. 2)

Hence, Local Matters could incorporate greater parent involvement in the Food is Elementary program.

Lastly, one additional question I wanted to observe was if educating children could educate the parents. I mentioned above that I believe more education can be directed to the parents. While I stand by that statement, although I do not think the children can teach entire classroom lessons to the parents, I do think children introduce the topic of healthy food and trying new foods to the parents. Indianola K8 Informal's

students even challenge the parent's food choices if a food a parent buys contradicts the lessons learned. When I interviewed the parents, many said the child's criticism did not offend them. In fact, parents recognized these events as an opportunity to discuss each other's beliefs regarding food. The child's challenges also made parents contemplate their food purchases and choices. One parent spoke about her experience at a McDonald's drive through. Her daughter said she wanted apples instead of french fries. The mother was impressed, although she got french fries for herself. While her child ate the apples, the mother contemplated whether or not she could or should forego the french fries.

Although I cannot say the children teach the parents direct lessons, children do challenge their parents about unhealthy food choices. If anything, these confrontations spark unique dialogue, which makes both child and parent reevaluate their consumer behavior regarding food purchases and consumption.

The Documentary

Despite my limitations, I found my first documentary experience both educational and for the most part, successful. Through my struggles, I learned the importance of teamwork, the difficulty in acquiring approval for filming, the unique challenges of documentary filmmaking, and the complexity of storytelling.

Throughout this entire process, I wished for a team to help me not only with on-set needs, but also with the story. As I took on the roles of director, writer, editor, producer, cinematographer, and many more, I experienced the challenges each role faces in creating a documentary film. Having a fresh and unique perspective from each role would have contributed to an easier workflow and possibly a different outcome or film.

Furthermore, what made these roles so challenging was the nature of documentary film. These films all depend on real life situations. The stories, problems, accomplishments, disappointments all rely on timing, inspiring characters to act emotionally, and pure chance. Every process in documentary filmmaking may have a basic guideline, but in the end, most content is improvised. For instance, although I had a general idea of the answers to my interview questions, I never knew exactly what my interviewee would say. In fact, at times an answer I did not expect was the most intriguing answer.

Additionally, I learned that acquiring approval to film real people, especially children, was quite difficult. At first I struggled with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Documentary film falls in a confusing category not clearly defined by the IRB. While my film professors told me that the IRB does not consider documentary films under the scope of research, the IRB representatives at The Ohio State University could not provide a straightforward answer. After asking numerous people, I received mixed responses. Some said because I was filming children, I needed to complete an IRB.

Others told me I did not because documentaries are not considered research. In the end, to prevent possible conflict, I submitted an IRB application for my project. Initially, the IRB replied asking for additional revisions and answers. After an exhausting month long process, the IRB notified me that I did not need an IRB. Had I known this beforehand, I could have skipped this application process and filmed in Indianola K8 Informal a month before.

Acquiring approval from the schools was not too difficult. After receiving consent from the principal, I simply sent a proposal to the district. They replied quickly and I could start immediately.

For approval to film children, parents strongly protect the use of their child's image and voice. Although no parent confronted me about my project, only 28 children participated. Some children could not participate due to legal issues regarding their divorced parents. My film could have changed drastically if all 88 children's parents gave consent for filming. Likewise, I had a greater challenge finding parents to interview. Only six parents participated. I hoped to film at least one parent who opposed the program, simply to attain that perspective for the film. Fortunately for Local Matters, no parent I interviewed opposed their curriculum. Had I acquired this opposing opinion, I could have integrated a greater sense of struggle or conflict in the film.

Lastly, I struggled in the editing room with the film's story. After multiple attempts, I found my creation dull and boring. I edited my film like I wrote my thesis,

which did not translate well in video. After months of contemplation, I decided to tell the story differently from my paper. Instead of focusing on my in-depth analysis on Local Matters, I tried to tell the program's story through the eyes of the children. While I could not completely do this from the children's perspective due to their lack of knowledge on the organization and their ability to speak sensibly, I incorporated more child opinions and explanations of their experiences in their own section of the film. After all, I shadowed this program to observe how much the children learn. What better way to understand than to ask them myself, and reveal their answers to my audience?

Although I always believe I can continuously improve my work, I am satisfied with the current project. If anything, I am grateful for this educational opportunity and for the occasion to meet the wonderful children and parents of Indianola K8 Informal and the Local Matters staff.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The Qualitative Research

If I continued this project in the future, I would follow Food is Elementary from start to finish for at least one year. I would include a quantitative research component to the project by sending home surveys for parents to answer throughout the year rating their satisfaction with the program. Through surveys, I could reach the parents who declined to participate in the documentary. I could also conduct quantitative research on the children's knowledge of nutrition and dietary health before and after the program. This would also allow me to reach the children who declined to participate in the film. If time and school approval were not an issue, I would shadow the Food is Elementary program in more schools. Local Matters actually conducts this program in 28 schools with a wide range of grade levels and students of different economic backgrounds. I could have observed how the program is received from school to school. In addition, I could study each school's unique challenges to the program.

In an ideal world, I would also conduct more research with the parents. Understanding the parent's food beliefs and shopping habits gives great insight into the effectiveness of the program and the child's developing attitude towards food. I could ask parents to give me their grocery receipts throughout the year or conduct periodic interviews.

Lastly, to test the program's effectiveness, I would take a control group of students who did not partake in the Food is Elementary Program, and one group of students who did partake in the Food is Elementary Program. My first year of observations, before Food is Elementary begins, I would allow the children to enter a room full of different foods ranging from unhealthy to healthy food options. Three years later, I can take these same children, set them in the same environment with the same choices, and observe if the children who participated in Food is Elementary actually choose healthier foods. While asking children facts about food tests their knowledge of healthy food, this experiment would test if this knowledge influences their behavior and consumer choices.

The Documentary

If I could continue this film project, I would clear my schedule of all classes and disruptions. This way, I could shadow the Local Matters program, parents, and children as much as needed. Moreover, I would require extra assistance. I would gather a production team to head different film departments such as sound, cinematography, story etc.

I would also attempt to address the more complicated issues Local Matters faces. By documenting their organization for a full year, I could truly grasp an understanding of the program's financial challenges. Other interesting disputes could also occur if I

shadowed Local Matters starting their Food is Elementary program in a new school. I could observe how the new school's parents and teachers welcome the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Given my short observation of Local Matters, I cannot conclude definite predictions of the programs' long-term effectiveness. To do so, one must follow these children for years, to observe how the programs' teachings confront outside variables, such as advertising, changing economic conditions, culture, and much more.

Although I cannot determine long-term effects of this program, I can still draw a few conclusions from my main observations.

1. Local Matters' Food is Elementary program encourages children to try different foods at a younger age, which increases their exposure to healthy foods options.
2. The program creates a fun environment conducive to learning. With the excitement of hands-on involvement, art projects, music, dancing, socializing, children make positive associations with healthy food.
3. More children try and enjoy healthy food through groupthink.
4. Local Matters builds a community of support to ensure the success of their program. By teaching in schools that welcome them, engaging the parents through newsletters, involving the community through gardening, and hiring a passionate staff, the organization attempts to build consistency and reinforcement of classroom lessons in the child's life.

To fully understand this program's benefits, I suggest increasing the sample size

of schools involved and long-term observation.

Further research into programs such as Local Matters' Food is Elementary curriculum is imperative for the health of America's youth as well as America's future. One must study how these advocates try to inspire change, so that these organizations and other change advocates can improve on their methods. In addition, further research can spread awareness on these change advocates' positive contributions to real issues facing our nation and the world, issues such as the environment, energy, health, etc.

Children are the future, and with every generation, we hope the future becomes brighter. We hope to offer our children a life and world better than ours and to eventually reach eternal prosperity and happiness for all. With our current situation so grim that experts predict our heaviest children are twice as likely as the thinnest to die by 55, how can we expect our children to better the world? (Rabin 2010) How can we give our children a world so dismal?

Thankfully, I believe we can change the future by joining together as a community and educating and instilling positive habits in the young. I have witnessed this through Local Matters. With further research, people can prove through education, change can spread like wild fire. When parents and grandparents witness their child's joy and elation regarding new healthful habits, these positive changes could eventually form a ripple effect through the generations.

Lastly, I asked the Local Matters staff, "Can you change everyone?"

They answered, “No, but change is possible, and you must try.”

With future predictions so dim, I believe we have no choice but to try. And I see in the Indianola K8 Informal children a new generation of hope. While some may doubt the Local Matters Food is Elementary program’s effectiveness, one cannot deny the visible and contagious enthusiasm the program has instilled in the children regarding healthy diet and living. And because of the children’s clear optimism and eagerness, I agree that change is possible and we must try.

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APPENDIX A: LOCAL MATTERS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Please state your name and your role in Local Matters.

What is Local Matters? Categorize different parts of the organization.

What are Local Matters' goals and objectives?

How did Local Matters get started?

How and why did you get involved with Local Matters?

What programs does Local Matters run?

What is the Food is Elementary program?

When did Food is Elementary begin?

What are the goals of Food is Elementary?

What is the age of the children you teach in Food is Elementary? Why did you choose this age group?

What does a typical lesson include?

What do you try to incorporate in the lessons? (tie happiness to food, include stories, play time, smelling, touching, etc. Rank order of importance of food: Local, organic, healthy)

At how many schools do you teach Food is Elementary?

How is this program run? How does it get started?

Does Local Matters contact the schools or vice versa?

How do you choose what schools to teach at? (parent support, staff support?)

How do you ensure your program will not be rejected? i.e. incorporate parent volunteers, staff, parent newsletters, recipes

How is Food is Elementary funded or supported?

What challenges has this program faced (no need to give names)

a. Curriculum

b. Parents or School Opposition

c. Politics

d. Funding

What do you think are the challenges and strengths of the program?

Talk about the statistics of the Food is Elementary Program.

Talk about the statistics of health in Columbus

In the ideal world, what would you change to improve the program, if anything?

Have you seen a difference in the children's behavior?

Have you seen a difference in the parent's behavior?

Do you have any statistical findings on how your program has affected the children?

Why do you think it is hard to change people's diet and health? Why is food such a personal issue? Why do you think people resist change with food?

APPENDIX B: PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Who is Local Matters?

What do you think the Food is Elementary program teaches?

What do you think the goals of the program are?

How involved are you with the Food is Elementary program?

What are your opinions on the program?

Have you noticed a change in your child's food choices?

Have you noticed a change your food choices?

What kind of food do you cook at home?

What do you feel holds you back from instilling healthy food habits in your child?

What are the weaknesses of the program?

What are the strengths of the program?

Would you like more or less involvement with the program?

How important do you think the program is for children?

Would you like to see programs like these instilled in more schools?

APPENDIX C: CHILDREN INTERVIEW GUIDE

What does Local Matters try to teach you?

What are you eating?

What vegetables are in that food?

How does it smell?

How does it taste?

Tell me one fact you learned today.

Do you remember what you learned last week?

What was your favorite food lesson?

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite healthy food?

What vitamins are in yellow foods?

What is the yellow stripe on the food pyramid?

What do you make when you put beans and rice together?

Do you want Local Matters to come back?

Do you think other children should participate in this program?

Why is this program important for children?